

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 JUSE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1591
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
DEA HQTS WASHDC

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LIMA FOR MARTIN L. CHESHES

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, PINS, CO
SUBJECT: MILITARY PROTECTION FOR JUDGES

1. SPECIAL PROTECTION SERVICE FOR COLOMBIAN JUDGE WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ACCORDING TO AN ARTICLE APPEARING IN EL TIEMPO, MAY 18. THE REPORT, ATTRIBUTED TO A "MILITARY SOURCE", STATES THAT THE DECISION WAS MADE AT A RECENT NATIONAL SECURITY COUCL MEETING AT THE REQUEST OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, CESAR GOMEZ ESTRADA, FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE DETRIMENTAL CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MANY JUDGES OPERATE, ESPECIALLY THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE "ACTIONS OF BANDS OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS". THE ARTICLE CONCLUDED THAT NO DETAILS OF THE PROTECTION PLAN WERE DIVULGED BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD NEUTRALIZE ITS EFFECTS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE ARTICLE ONLY STATES GENERALLY THAT THE ACTION IS BEING TAKEN TO AVOID FURTHER ATTACKS OF THE TYPE THAT HAVE RECENTLY COST THE LIVES OF VARIOUS JUDGES, THE
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IMMEDIATE CATALYST WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MURDER OF A CALI JUDGE MAY 5. IT IS ACCEPTED THAT THE MURDER WAS PRECIPITATED BY AN EXPECTED ADVERSE RULING BY AN HONEST JUDGE AGAINST A TRAFFICKER. TO MAKE THE MESSAGE EVEN MORE FORCEFUL, THE MURDER WAS CARRIED OUT WHEN THE JUDGE WAS RETURNING TO THE AFTERNOON SESSION OF A NARCOTICS SEMINAR FOR JUDGES OF THE AREA AT WHICH THE MINISTER OF

JUSTICE WAS IN ATTENFANCE. THE REMAINDER OF THE TWO-DAY SEMINAR WAS CANCELLED OUT OF RESPECT FOR THE MURDERED COLLEAGUE AND IN THE FACE OF RUMORS THAT A BOMB WOULD BE PLACED IN THE AUDITORIUM WHERE THE SEMINAR WAS BEING HELD. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MURDER THERE WERE CALLS IN THE PRESS FOR PROTECTION FOR THE JUDGES.

3. COMMENT: AT THE PRESENT THE JUDGES ARE SUBJECTED TO A TWO-PRONGED ATTACK BY THE TRAFFICKERS AND OTHER CRIMINAL ELEMENTS, BRIBERY ON THE ONE HAND AND HIGHLY CREDIBLE PHYSICAL INTIMIDATION ON THE OTHER. IF INDEED AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF PROTECTION BY THE MILITARY IS BEING SET UP, IT WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD IN REFORM OF THE OPERATION OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM.
DREXLER

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